



EOC Spot Report: Update 2 West Fertilizer Plant Explosion

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**US Environmental Protection Agency
18, 2013**

Report as of 2130 EDT April

Overview: At approximately 1950 CDT on April 17, a fire and explosion at the West Fertilizer plant decimated the town of West, TX north of Waco, causing multiple injuries and fatalities. The exact number is unknown at this time. A fire at the facility may have caused the explosion, resulting in a shock wave in the area, causing multiple fires in a six block radius. The cause of the explosion is still under investigation. Several homes and structures including an apartment building, nursing home and middle school are severely impacted.

The facility was destroyed in the initial explosion, with the exception of four "bullet" tanks. Initial information indicates that one hopper car filled with ammonium nitrate was on-site at the time of the explosion. This hopper car was blown off the rail siding and was damaged and is believed to have released the powdered fertilizer onto the ground.

State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions: Multiple emergency response agencies are engaged in fire-fighting and public safety activities. The Chemical Safety Board has deployed to the accident. IMAAC was activated and an IMAAC product (plume model) was shared interagency.

Between 0430 to 0530 on 18 April, the 6th Civil Support Team (CST) and Waco Fire Department HAZMAT conducted a Level B entry to deploy air monitoring instrumentation near the incident location. On 18 April 18, TCEQ contractors performed an entry to assess a leaking anhydrous ammonia tank on-site.

In addition, TCEQ contractors deployed and are currently conducting air monitoring around the facility perimeter. Other state and local responders are conducting search and rescue operations in affected neighborhoods near the incident location.

EPA Actions: The Region 6 EOC is activated to level 3. Region 6 deployed 2 OSCs, 8 contractors and the mobile command post to the site.

EPA is performing air monitoring in residential areas around the site, including areas where search and rescue operations are on going and areas not affected by the evacuation order, which remained in place as of 1800 hrs on 18 April. Specific chemicals being monitored for are volatile organic compounds, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon monoxide, and lower explosive limit of methane gas.

ASPECT completed another flight over West, TX to collect additional chemical and photo information. Some fires were still burning, at the time of the flight. Preliminary results of plume data indicated that ammonia was detected in ranges estimated to be between 2 ppm and 5 ppm.

Media Interest: HIGH

The HQ EOC is closely monitoring this incident and will provide more updates as necessary.